

To: Myers, Craig[Myers.Craig@epa.gov]
Cc: Faulk, Libby[Faulk.Libby@epa.gov]
From: McClain-Vanderpool, Lisa
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August 8, 2015

FINAL STATEMENT FOR RELEASE:

EPA is committed to working closely with first responders and state and local officials to ensure the safety of citizens and to evaluate impact to water contaminated by the spill. EPA teams are deployed throughout the Four Corners region, responding to concerns and collecting data.

EPA Region 8 is also in close coordination with Region 6 and Region 9 and the states of Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Southern Ute Tribe and Navajo Nation. EPA is sharing information as quickly as possible with the public as experts work to evaluate any effects the spill may have on drinking water, public health, agriculture, fish and wildlife. Regular updates on the response for the public and the media are scheduled throughout the weekend. The latest updates and information on the response are available at: <http://www2.epa.gov/region8/gold-king-mine-release-emergency-response>.

8/8/15 Update:

- The first two days after the incident, the plume was moving at approximately 4 miles per hour. According to the EPA's ASPECT (Airborne Spectral Photometric Environmental Collection Technology) flyover, as of the morning of Aug 8th, the plume had reached the confluence of the San Juan River. As of 4pm this afternoon, the plume had roughly reached Kirtland, New Mexico. The plume has been visually diluted and the leading edge of it is far less defined. The water is reported to be muddy with an orange tinge rather than solid orange.

- Sampling data from Cement Creek and the Animas River near Silverton from Aug. 5th and 6th show pH and metals concentrations are decreasing to pre-event conditions. We continue to monitor river conditions at multiple locations to detect trends.

- The data shows that pH (acidity) levels and dissolved metals in the Cement Creek and the upper portions of the Animas River spiked in the surface water at locations impacted by the contaminant plume. The data shows in the upstream locations the resident time of the plume in any one location was not long lasting. The trend downstream, in the Animas and San Juan Rivers, is expected to be similar or better than upstream, as the contaminant plume passes.

- Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) officials have been monitoring the effects of the spill on terrestrial and aquatic wildlife since the incident began. CPW is watching for any impacts on wildlife, whether they are acute or chronic. Fish are especially sensitive to changes in water quality. CPW is also monitoring a control station on a clean tributary.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife has indicated they are optimistic that the effects of the spill on terrestrial wildlife will be minimal.

- The water in Cement Creek and the Animas River in Silverton is clearing. The adit is still discharging approximately 500 gallons per minute and the trend is that flow is decreasing. The discharge is being diverted into the newly constructed ponds and treated before it enters Cement Creek. The treatment appears to be effective.

- A summary of pH and dissolved metals data is available here:
<http://epaossc.org/goldkingmine>

NEXT STEPS

- Continue to treat drainage at mine site.
- Continue to sample throughout the Four Corners region
- Evaluate and publish data as it is finalized.
- Continue coordination with State, Federal, Tribal and local officials as well as community members, landowners/ water users.
- Continue to provide drinking water to private well owners.

Lisa McClain-Vanderpool

Public Affairs Specialist/Media Officer

Office of Communications and Public Involvement

US Environmental Protection Agency, Region 8

1595 Wynkoop Street

Denver, Colorado 80202

Office 303.312.6077

Cell 303.501.4027